A FULL CONFUTATION OF Witchcraft:

More particularly of the

DEPOSITIONS

Againſt

JANE WENHAM,

Lately Condemned for a

WITCH; *at* Hertford.

In which

The Modern Notions of Witches are overthrown, and the Ill Conſequences of ſuch Doctrines are expoſed by Arguments; proving that,

Witchcraft is Prieſtcraft.

A Natura multa, plura ficta, à Dæmone nulla.

In a Letter *from a Phyſician in* Hertfordſhire, *to his Friend in* London.

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A FULL CONFUTATION OF *Witchcraft*, &c.

SIR,

THO' the Province you have aſſign'd me is the laſt I ſhould have undertaken, by my own Conſent, yet a Requeſt from you, carrying the Force of an abſolute Command along with it, I have ventur'd to give you my haſty Thoughts upon a Subject which otherwiſe ſhould have paſs'd amongſt the reſt of the pious Frauds that have plagu'd and diſtracted Mankind.

I am fully aware to what Hazards a Man of a Publick Character, expoſes his Reputation to, in talking freely,

much more in writing on ſuch a Topick, eſpecially in the Country, where to make the leaſt Doubt, is a Badge of Infidelity; and not to be ſuperſtitious, paſſes for a dull Neutrality in Religion, if not a direct Atheiſm. And here, *Sir*, I cannot but envy one Privilege you enjoy in Town, which is, a Freedom of Thought and Talk, whilſt we are very often reduc'd to the Neceſſity of ſwallowing the greateſt Improbabilities, without the leaſt Change of Countenance, for fear of offending any Bigot of Figure. To offer any Reaſon in Bar of their Perſwaſion, would be call'd an Attempt upon their Judgments; ſo that in all popular Errors, if we diſcover the leaſt Incredulity, we run the Riſque of being taken for Men of no Religion; or if we pretend to be implicit Believers, we play the Hypocrite with our Reaſon and Conſcience. But as to my own part, who never yet came under the ſlaviſh Ties of popular Compliances, or ever ſuffer'd my Judgment to mingle with the Crowd, am not very tender of contradicting any Opinion, how powerfully ſoever ſupported, where I ſee any tendency in it towards enſlaving Mankind,

or

or eſtabliſhing Error on the Foot of Pride and Superſtition. I am glad ſo judicious and penetrating a Judge went the Circuit, who could not be impos'd upon by the ſtale Artifice of Exorciſms, or ſuffer his Faith to bend to an enchanted Feather. His rational Diſtruſt of ſo many Improbabilities, I hope, will be a laſting Precedent to others in that venerable Station; ſo that hereafter we may not have that Waſte of Humane Blood in every Village, upon the wild Teſtimonies of a parcel of Brain-ſick People, who often ſtand in need of Dieting and Shaving themſelves.

What I have to ſay upon this Head being to be compriz'd within the Compaſs of a Letter, I ſhall not enter upon a long Diſſertation of the diſtinct Species of Evil Spirits, or the Difference the Learned make between them; but directly fall upon examining the Abſurdity and Inconſiſtency of the late Depoſitions againſt *Jane Wenham*. 2*dly*, Shew that all our Proofs of Witchcraft, are very fallacious, and conſequently ought never to extend to Life. And in the laſt place, That the pretended Exorciſms practiſed on *Anne Thorn*,

Thorn, are meer ſpiritual Juggles, and the very Spirit of Prieſt-craft.

Of all the ridiculous Stories that have been vamp'd up to ſeduce and impoſe upon the credulous Part of Mankind, I never yet met with any one uſher'd in with ſuch a Farce, as that of *Mathew Gliſton*'s being ſent upon a Fool's Errand to fetch Straw from a Dunghil, leap three Miles, without having any further Violence offered to him. This was a ſportive ſort of Witch-craft; and *Jane Wenham*'s Familiar at that time, was a merry Droll, he muſt be rank'd amongſt that Species of Demons, of which they ſay there are but thirty Thouſand who divert themſelves with wild Pranks here upon Earth, and ſometimes are ſaid to do agreeable Services to Mankind. But ſetting this aſide, how natural is it to conjecture, that this Fellow, in order to ingratiate himſelf with his Maſter, and knowing the Spleen he bore *Jane Wenham*, to contrive this fooliſh Capricio of his own, which, how ridiculous and unaccountable ſoever it may ſound, ſtill makes it more the ignorant Fellow's own Invention, and could not fail of being digeſted by all Degrees of People, after they had proclaim'd

her

her a Witch for ſome Years? But can any Man in his ſerious Thoughts believe a Spirit to be an Actor in ſo comical a Part as is here repreſented? Can it enter any Man's Heart to conceive, that any Familiar, or Demon, would engage in ſuch Trifles, to come and play idle inſignificant Pranks, enter a humane Body, force it againſt its Will to ſuch a place, and *cui Bono*, why truly, for a pennyworth of Straw, and to bring it home in his Shirt. Theſe are ſuch crude, indigeſted Stories, as would ſcarce paſs upon the poor ignorant Lap-landers.

This was only deſign'd, I preſume, as a merry Prologue, to make the Auditors laugh, till the Curtain was drawn, and the Scene open'd, where the reſt of the Entertainment is equally diverting: *Jane Wenham* is affronted for being call'd Witch by *Chapman*, Mr. *Gardiner* the Parſon is made Referree of the Difference, aſſigns her but a Shilling Damage; which ſhe reſenting, ſaid, ſhe would have Juſtice ſomewhere elſe, if ſhe could not have it there. Though there was nothing harſh in that Expreſſion of *Jane Wenham*'s, but what might drop from any Perſon either conſcious

ſcious to herſelf, or not conſcious of the Crime ſhe was accuſed, conſidering the Provocation was ſo great in the Eye of the World, and the Damage aſſign'd her was ſo ſmall; yet upon an Accident falling out in Mr. *Gardiner*'s Family, this Expreſſion of hers is wreſted to a Threatning of ſome dreadful Revenge upon the Parſon's Houſe. But here a modeſt Query may ariſe: Why did not the Blow fall directly upon the Parſon, who had injur'd her, or transferr'd to ſo remote a Branch of his regard as that of a Servant? That Queſtion, upon ſecond Thoughts, may be too free: What! Thunder-ſtrike Oaks? What! a Clergy-man lie expoſed to the Fury of the Devil? No, no, they are all of the holy Seed, and cannot be reach'd by any infernal Power: So the Man of God being impregnable, the poor Maid, who is deſcrib'd equally as innocent, is left to ſtand the Shock. And really the firſt prank is very extraordinary: *Anne Thorn* finding a Roaming in her Head, and thinking on *Jane Wenham*, is with her lame Knee, all on a ſudden, tranſported againſt her Will, half a Mile, climbs over a Five-Bar-gate to

gather

gather ſome Sticks, meets an Old Woman, who gives her a crooked Pin to pin up the Sticks in her Apron and Gown, and ſo ſhe returns, and Mrs. *Gardiner* finds her ſtripp'd upon her Return. A ſtrange and wonderful Account, and all done in the ſpace of ſeven Minutes, which would take up ſeven Years to make good Proof of. Now the genuine Account of the Matter ſeems to lie thus: *Anne Thorn* ſitting by the Kitchin Fire muſing, and her Spirits being under a growing Diſorder, as we may rationally ſuppoſe they were, by the Sequel: Such an irregular Motion as ſtripping her ſelf, might ſtrike upon her Fancy, and ſhe be prompted to take off her Gown, and gather up a few Oaken Twigs, which lie generally looſe about a Kitchin Hearth, and make them up in a Bundle: That being ſeiz'd with an Epileptick Fit, as the Symptom of finding a Roaming in her Head (by which, no doubt, ſhe meant a Giddineſs or Vertigo) plainly indicates, *Jane Wenham*, who was in her Thoughts juſt at her going into the Fit, might very probably beat ſtrongly upon her Imagination, during that Paroxiſm; and that Mrs. *Gardiner* coming in at the

Cloſe of the Fit, and finding her in that diſorder'd Poſture, *Anne Thorn* related to her what was ſo warm upon her Fancy. This is natural to ſuppoſe, without ſtretching of Reaſon, or common Senſe. But here was a very good Handle for a Story againſt the ſuſpected *Jane Wenham*; and when they were furniſh'd with ſuch Materials from the poor Delirant, they might as well make a Wild-Gooſe Chaſe of it, as let the Scene be confin'd to ſo narrow a Compaſs as the Chimney-Corner. Evidence in ſuch a Caſe could not be long a procuring; no doubt, the whole Pariſh, after a Prepoſſeſſion of *Jane Wenham*'s being a Witch for many Years, could not fail of believing any Thing againſt her, even in Oppoſition to their Senſes. Accordingly two of *John Chapman*'s Men are pitch'd upon as Witneſſes to this Half-Mile-Courſe of *Anne Thorn*'s; one of which, I preſume, was the Fellow that was ſent to pick Straws three Miles, and had not worn that Journey out of his Head; and another (as diſcerning a Spirit as himſelf) Evidence that perhaps might juſtly hang a Day for Sheep-biting. This, I ſay, ſeems to be a plain and

full

full Account of the firſt Adventure. But when People come to talk poſitively, and depoſe the ſeveral Paſſages as are related by *Anne Thorn*, upon Oath, they are ſhocking to every common Ear. In a true Laxation of the Knee, it is impoſſible to walk, the Bone being out of its proper Socket, rendring the Motion of the Muſcles altogether uſeleſs. If it was only a violent Extention of the Rotula, ſomething might be allow'd: But it's hard to tell what this was, your Country Bone-Setters ſeldom plaguing their Heads with Diſtinctions.

Now here, if I might find room for Belief, I would rather place *Anne Thorn* amongſt the Number of Maniacks, than Demoniacks, for they really beſpeak ſomething more than Hiſterical: Her frequent Ravings, her lucid Intervals, her ſtrong Imagination, her more than ordinary Strength, are Symptoms which agree well enough with Mad People; her frequent Calling out upon *Jane Wenham*, as the Source of all her Woe, no doubt, was owing to an Idea ſtrongly impreſs'd upon her Brain, of *Jane Wenham*'s being a Witch, and a miſ-

chievous Perſon, improved by an heated Imagination, and raiſed to a Pitch of Fury againſt her by the quick and impetuous Motion of the animal Spirits, and rapid Motion of the Blood.

As to that Objection which lies in my way, of *Anne Thorn*'s appearing very compoſed, and free from any Diſorder of Mind, before ſhe was ſeiz'd with theſe Fits. It is anſwered, That generally before Maniacks, or mad People, fall into their Diſtemper, there is a great Calm and Slowneſs of Motion in the Animal Spirits, which occaſions a very ſlow Motion in the Humours about the Bowels, and very often a Stagnation, that diſpoſes them to a particular ſort of Putrefaction, whence gradually proceeding ſome putrid, ſharp, and ſalin Particles that oppreſs the Animal Spirits, and dull their Motion, till they ſeparate gradually, and mix with the whole Maſs of Blood, then at length great Crowds iſſuing out, do violently ſtimulate and hurry the Animal Spirits into that Fury and Tempeſt.

As to her ſeeing an Old Woman muffled up in a Riding-Hood, and giving her a crooked Pin, and then vaniſhing,

niſhing, is all ridiculous and fanciful. For in leſs Indiſpoſitions than this poor Maid is reported to labour under, we find People, either thro' a Viciouſneſs of Sight, or by a certain Situation of Objects, they believe they ſee that which really is not. In nervous Caſes, does it not often happen, that by a certain Motion of our Eyes, Objects appear to us otherwiſe than they ſeem to us when without this Motion? In ſhort, our Senſes are allow'd to be great Deceivers. But I take this Apparition of the Old Woman in a Riding-hood to be the effect of a deprav'd Imagination; Fear, Terror, and Rage, had ſo diſtracted her Brain, and multiply'd ſo many monſtrous Idea's of *Jane Wenham*'s deſtructive Power, that *Anne Thorn* could, in caſe of need, have, by the Strength of her warm Fancy, tranſform'd Old *Jane* into more Shapes and Figures, than ſhe or her Familiar were able to do.

After this, *Anne Thorn* is repreſented to us falling into Trembling and Convulſions, and upon her Recovery, impell'd to go and fetch more Sticks, without which ſhe ſhould never be well, and leaping over Five-Bar-Gates in her Paſſage;

Paſſage; and that ſhe was hindred from going any further by *Jane Wenham*, who ſtood in the Way to intercept her. place this Account with the Evidence, as I do the other amongſt the Mid ſummer-Night's Dreams, and do deny it to be in the Power of any Perſon, the World calls a Witch, or Familiar, to force any Perſon againſt their Wills upon ſuch trifling Errands; or to act ſo upon them, as to make them leap Five-Bar-Gates, *&c.* As to the *Firſt*, If it be ſaid that a Demon, Witch, or Spirit, forces any Creature to act in ſuch and ſuch a manner, I demand in the next place, how he forces him? Does he abſolutely deprive him of the Liberty of doing what he pleaſes? How came he by this Power? Has he it from himſelf, or from ſome Superior Being? I believe few are ſo ſanguine to affirm, that he has of himſelf the Power of forcing Men to do whatever he pleaſes, without their being able to avoid ſubmitting to his Decrees. If it be urg'd, that he holds this Power of the Supreme Being, what Proof can be produc'd of it? Whatever Arguments can be form'd to prove this, Can it poſſibly ſuit with the Divine

Wiſdom

Wiſdom and Goodneſs? Is there any Agreement betwixt ſo immenſe a Power lodg'd in a wicked and revengeful Spirit, and the Divine Love to Mankind, joined with his Knowledge of their Weakneſs, and how eaſily they are captivated and ſurpriz'd by his Wiles? As to the Second, 'tis no difficult matter to ſay a Witch's Familiar, Demon, (or what you pleaſe, amongſt the vaſt Variety of Names to call them) can do this or that; but this does not convince every thinking Perſon of his or her preternatural Power. Let's make a familiar Inſtance: No Spirit acts otherwiſe than by its own Will, and its Will conſiſts in nothing but a bare Thought. Then I demand, how our own Spirit, that is our Soul, does the leaſt thing to our Bodies, if it be true that this is done by Thought? If it is our Will, our Foot and Hand move, and in ſuch a manner as we would have them. Let us try the ſame on another Body which is not ours, without the Interpoſition of our own. Let's try a little only by Thought, to make a Body, or the Reſemblance or Shade of any one in any Place whatever here on Earth, or in the Air.

Now

How then ſhould a Demon or Familiar do this, who has no Body of his own? But ſetting aſide this, perhaps as a little too abſtruſe, you'll ſay perhaps, the Supreme Being permits this Demon or Familiar to enter the Body of the Perſon, and ſo actuate it as it pleaſes. What a Chain of Abſurdities muſt we admit of here. Here we muſt ſuppoſe God working a Miracle upon every trifling Occaſion, to oblige the evil Spirits; as if Miracles were not too much to grant them, conſidering how ſtrongly they are bent to do Mankind Miſchief; and not only this, but likewiſe indulge them in ſeveral apiſh, ridiculous Pranks, which they continually abuſe, to the Diſhonour of the Creator, and the Damage of his innocent Creatures, and to ſum up this Inconſiſtency, all to humour ſome poor, decripid, ſilly Old Woman. I paſs by a Hurdle of Follies, much of the ſame Nature, till *Jane Wenham* is brought to *Anne Thorn*, who long'd to ſatiate her ſelf with her Blood: Accordingly *Jane Wenham* comes to her, and *Anne Thorn*'s Colour and Speech returns, and ſhe ſcratches *Jane Wenham*'s Forehead, but could fetch

no

no Blood, which occaſioned a very ſage Remark. Now, who but a pack of Idiots, could have expected a Torrent of Blood, or indeed but a few Drops, from a ſhrivell'd Old Forehead, which, if ſqueez'd and collected, would not yeild half an Ounce? and even in its moſt florid State, is but a dry Muſcle, and the Vein a rowling one, not eaſily to be launch'd by a Finger-Nail.

After this, we find *Jane Wenham* ſubmitting to be ſearch'd, and willing to undergo all thoſe Trials that never fail of diſcovering a Witch, according to the Country Probations; but this we find paſs'd by as unneceſſary at that time, but afterwards try'd to no purpoſe; tho' if any of thoſe Perſons concern'd in her Arraignment, had from their Souls believ'd her as they repreſented her, I am apt to believe, they would have been likewiſe ſatisfied in that Point, as well as given to other ridiculous Notions and Experiments, as burning the Bundle of Sticks, and the Pin, and the Feathers, *&c.* But now comes on the famous Trial of Skill, about repeating the Lord's-Prayer. The Reverend Mr. *Strut*, the chief Champion in the Liſts, and his Fel-

low Labourer Mrs. *Gardiner*, againſt a poor ignorant Old Woman. *Impar congreſſus:* And great Streſs is laid upon her repeating, *Lead us not into Temptation*, with two Negatives. Now I would venture a ſmall Wager upon it, take *England* round, and there are 3 Parts in 4 of the Country People pronounce that Sentence generally after this manner. But not putting this infallible Touch-ſtone upon ſo uncertain an Iſſue, as coming from the Mouth of a Reverend Divine; It may be worth the while to enquire, whether too many of the Auditors were not very curious in watching every Lapſe of her Tongue, or preventing her Repetition of thoſe Words, with too many impertinent Queſtions, or alarming her with the ſuppos'd Impoſſibility of repeating them. But drawing off from Conjectures, I would fain know how the falſe Pronunciation of that Sentence particularly, came to be the *Criterion* of a Witch; I think none of our Rubricks enjoin it as a ſpecifick Trial, and I hope, no learned Divine has borrow'd it either from a Popiſh Legend, or found it amongſt ſome Country Receipts for a Strain, a Quaking-Pudding, or a Cut-Finger:

Finger: No, we cannot think ſo meanly of any Branch of the ſacred Body. Then let's come a little cloſer to the Point, and try it by dint of Reaſon. It would be ſome Satisfaction to know, why a Witch, *&c.* as the Reverend call poor old *Jane*, ſhould boggle at one Sentence more than another. The Reaſon aſſign'd, I preſume, is, that they being conſcious of running voluntarily into Temptation, have not the Face to pray that God would prevent them from falling into it; whereby the Reverend allow their Witch ſome Grace. But pray then, with what Front can ſuch a Creature ſay, *Our Father*, *&c.* when ſhe has renounc'd God, and reſign'd her ſelf up to the Devil by Contract? How can ſhe ſay, *Thy Will be done*, when ſhe is continually employ'd in the Devil's Service? In fine, How can ſhe pray, *Thy Kingdom come*, or for the ſecond Coming of Chriſt to Judgment, when ſhe muſt expect by that Judgment to be irreverſibly damn'd? But here's a very ſtrong Argument they bring to confirm the Guilt of *Jane Wenham*, *viz.* her falling down at Mrs. *Gardiner*'s Feet, before ſhe gave in her Information, and begging her not to ſwear a-

gainſt her, uſing many Expreſſions of Fear, leaſt ſhe ſhould be ſent to Goal. Now with me it's a moot Point, whether *Jane Wenham*'s earneſt Entreaty to Mrs. *Gardiner*, not to ſwear againſt her, does not ſeem rather a tender Regard to Mrs. *Gardiner*'s Soul, for fear ſhe ſhould Perjure her ſelf in her Depoſition, than a Diſcovery of her own Guilt. But ſetting that aſide, *Jane Wenham* might very readily ſuggeſt to her ſelf, that Mrs. *Gardiner* being the prime Undertaker in this Affair, a fierce Bigot, and a ſuperſtitious Believer of whatever dropt from *Anne Thorn*'s Mouth in her raving Fits, might, by a heat of Paſſion, peculiar to ſuch Zealots, give ſome Colourings of her own to the ridiculous Account ſhe was to relate: And *Jane Wenham* being a poor helpleſs Creature, deteſted by the whole Pariſh, upon the Suppoſition of her being a Witch, being ſenſible of the Weight and Authority of ſuch an Evidence, and that her Fate in a great meaſure depended upon her Depoſition, might, amidſt thoſe anxious Fears and Cares, be allow'd to ſollicit Mrs. *Gardiner*'s Favour, without the leaſt Colour of Suſpicion. Then as to expreſ-

ſing

ſing her Fears of being ſent to Goal, there is ſo little Streſs to be laid upon it, that nothing could have juſtify'd the Mention of it, but only that it ſerves to make this Collection of Prodigies more curious. For who is there without diſmal Apprehenſions of a Goal? Who thinks of Confinement without Horror? Much more might ſuch an abandon'd Wretch, who had neither Friends or Money, dread being ſent there, when, under her Circumſtances, ſhe could expect nothing leſs than a Courſe of Miſery and Hardſhip worſe than Death.

As to the Information of *Suſan Aylott*, it's ſo disjointed, and even conjectural, after her own Way of telling the Story, that it deſerves no Remark.

Thomas Adams's is likewiſe of the ſame Complexion. He, it ſeems, has 3 or 4 fat Sheep die of the Megrim, by feeding in too rank Paſture; and becauſe this poor old Creature was ſeen in his Turnip-Field, *ergo* ſhe bewitch'd his Sheep. Fair Conſequences, and which, if made uſe of, might ſerve to condemn all the innocent People of a Pariſh, as well as the guilty, in the ſpace of a Year.

Another Wiſe-acre ſwears he came within 3 Minutes of *Jane Wenham*'s threat-

threatning *Anne Thorn*; and if he had been in the *Indies* at that time, 'twas as much to the Purpoſe.

But here is ſome ſeeming weight in what comes next: Mr. *Strut* having renew'd his Proof of *Jane Wenham*'s Guilt, by her not repeating a particular Sentence or two in the Lord's-Prayer; after his Dialect (which I have already ſhewn to be inconcluſive) asks her, if ſhe had any hand in bewitching *Anne Thorn*; to which at firſt ſhe gave no poſitive Anſwer; but upon Mr. *Strut*'s telling her how beneficial ſuch a Confeſſion would be to her own Soul, and others, if ſhe was guilty, ſhe began to relent, and in the Preſence of Mr. *Gardiner*, and her Kinſman *Archer*, Mr. *Strut* ask'd her ſincerely to tell him whether ſhe was a Witch? ſhe ſaid ſhe was: Then he ask'd her, whether ſhe had not an hand in bewitching *Anne Thorn*? ſhe ſaid ſhe had, but there was another concern'd with her: Then he ask'd what induc'd her to it? ſhe ſaid, the Girl had once vex'd her. Then ſhe was ask'd, whether ſhe did not meet *Anne Thorn* on *Tueſday* Morning? To which ſhe anſwer'd, No: But being ask'd, whether it was not her Familiar? ſhe anſwer'd in the affirmative.

tive. She likewiſe confeſs'd, ſhe had liv'd in that Courſe of Life above 16 Years: She then being ask'd, what induc'd her to that Familiarity with the Devil? Said, it was a malicious and wicked Mind; for when any of her Neighbours vex'd her, ſhe us'd horrid Curſes and Imprecations, on which the Devil took Advantage over her.

With Submiſſion to this Reverend Divine, I think that all the Queſtions are very ſuperficial, and enſnaring, and half of them ſuch as ſhe knew not the meaning of. As to the firſt, Whether ſhe was a Witch, ſhe is ſaid to confeſs her ſelf to be ſo: Whereas, if his ſecond Queſtion had been, What is a Witch? ſhe would not have been able to tell; and I queſtion whether it might not have put his Reverence to ſome trouble to define: The Pariſh having lodg'd that Name over her for ſome Years, the poor ſimple Creature own'd her ſelf to be what they had ſtigmatiz'd her for, without either knowing the Hazard of Confeſſion, or the Properties of a Witch. The ſecond Queſtion is as unfair as the firſt: For ſhe not being ſuppoſed to know the Meaning of a Witch in the Latitude, her Accuſers took it, ſo by that ſecond Queſtion

ſtion they involv'd the poor ſtupid Creature in a Plot againſt her own Life. If the Queſtion had follow'd, about the Modus of her bewitching, ſhe would have been as much at a loſs as to have defin'd a Witch. The Third Queſtion about her Familiar, is equally enſnaring, ſhe not knowing the meaning of the Term, or the Uſe a Familiar is put to: The Parſon help'd her out with a leading Queſtion. Then as to her Confeſſion of having liv'd in that Courſe 16 Years, I take to be no more than a bare Computation of the Time the Pariſh had accounted her ſo. The laſt is as fair as the reſt, *viz.* What induc'd her to ſuch a Familiarity with the Devil? when we have no account of any ſhe made uſe of. What Familiarity this was, ſhould likewiſe have been enquir'd into: The original Contract between them produc'd, an Account likewiſe how the Commerce between them had been carry'd on; In what manner ſhe acted under the Devil? But inſtead of this, we have the old dry Anſwer, a wicked Mind, and that ſhe uſing to curſe her Neighbours, the Devil took advantage over her. Why is not the particular Advantage the Devil took over her explain'd?

No

No, doubt, the Devil takes advantage over every Perſon that tranſgreſſes, but not ſo as to bring him under his immediate Power and Influence: Neither do I believe the Devil took any more advantage over her, than any common Sinner. But the Queſtions and Anſwers are ſo prettily adapted, and contriv'd ſo well for ſhortning the Diſpute, and enſnaring the poor ſenſeleſs Creature in a few Words, that I cannot help believing but the whole Catechiſm, both Queſtion and Anſwer, was contriv'd by the Prieſt. Ay! But here is Self-Conviction, ſhe is condemn'd out of her own Mouth, and what neceſſity is there of farther Evidence. But conſider the Creature that thus condemns her ſelf: A poor, ſtupid ignorant Wretch, that had been harraſs'd out of her Senſes, threatned by all the Pariſh, Brow-beaten by the Juſtice, loaded with 20 hard-mouth'd Depoſitions, cloſeted by Prieſts, told the Advantages of confeſſing, and perhaps, that a frank Diſcovery might be of uſe to her. I ſay, weighing all theſe Circumſtances, What could be expected from this poor Wretch under this Conſternation? But however, it is no Rarety to find theſe reputed Socerers and Witches, accuſing themſelves of what they were never guilty,

even of killing Perſons, when they have been actually alive, either out of an unaccountable Vanity of diſtinguiſhing themſelves, or a vain Deſign of making themſelves fear'd.

After this, we are entertain'd with a merry Account of Caterwauling, and with ſuch variety of Accents, as are ſeldom heard but about Midnight. But we find *Ann Thorn*'s Fits continuing violent upon her, and taking notice of no Perſon; but when *Jane Wenham* was brought into the Room, ſhe flew up with great Strength and Fury, crying out, *What are you come to torment me*, and this done twice ſucceſſively, once when all the Family had given over *Anne Thorn* for dead.

It muſt be allow'd, that all Perſons labouring under thoſe violent Fits as *Ann Thorn* did, have their ſeeing and hearing much more exquiſite (tho' deprav'd) than others, in regard of the abundance of Animal Spirits which are contain'd and engendred, inſomuch that it may be affirm'd, that the greateſt part of their Blood is ſpiritualiz'd or converted into animal Spirits. Now we may rationally ſuppoſe, that *Anne Thorn* having ſpent her Fury upon *Jane Wenham* in the former Encounter, that long Intermiſſion

out

out of which ſhe could hardly be provok'd, but at the Appearance of *Jane Wenham*, may be aſcrib'd to the great Expence and Waſte of Animal Spirits in her laſt Fit, which ſhe was forc'd to repair, by giving the Remainder of her Spirits time to breed more.

In the next place, we meet with an enchanting Pin, which young *Chauncy* takes out of *Jane Wenham*'s Hand, and pricks her with, and at laſt fetches out a *Watry Serum*; by which, I preſume, they mean a Serous Blood. And truly, no more could be expected from a Woman advanc'd in Years, who liv'd low, and perhaps might have ſome other reaſon for ſuch a Scarcity of florid Blood. But after this, we find *Jane Wenham* goes home, and paſſes the Night in Singing and Dancing, ſaying, the Maid ſhould be well that Night: Was there ever ſuch a Mixture of Frenzy, Simplicity, and Unconcernedneſs? Truly, I am apt to think, *Jane Wenham* her ſelf was a little touched, by being ſo often put to the Torture of Ill-Tongues, and more an Object of Pity than Revenge.

Now comes on a ſecond-ſighted Evidence, who ſees Pins convey'd to *Anne Thorn* by an inviſible Means. 'Tis Pity there had been any more Depoſitions,

this is ſo concluſive: It would puzzle a Judge whether to try the Criminal or the Evidence: For the ſeeing an inviſible Power, looks very dangerous.

After this, theſe Witch-hunters make uſe of an infallible Secret of proving *Jane Wenham* a Witch, by putting ſome of *Anne Thorn*'s Urine into a Stone Bottle, tying the Cork down, and ſetting it over the Fire.

I preſume this Experiment, was made at the Inſtigation of Mrs. *Gardiner*, who was the prime She-Undertaker in this great Affair. If the Clergy were concern'd with the Maid's Urine, they would oblige the World with giving them a *Rationale* of its working ſuch ſurpriſing Effects.

In ſhort, theſe buſie People were teiſing *Jane Wenham* upon every Occaſion, that they had brought her to Fits at laſt, and it's no wonder to find her falling into the Alternatives of Grief and Joy.

Before *Jane Wenham* is ſent to Goal, Mr. *Strut* and Mr. *Gardiner* make another Effort upon her, and remind her of her former Confeſſion, which ſhe poor Creature took little Notice, of being full of Evaſions. By which we may learn, how little ſhe knew of the Conſequence of her confeſſing what ſhe did to the

Parſons;

Parſons; but ſhe finding they improv'd it to her Diſadvantage; and being adviſ'd, I preſume, to lie more upon her Guard, was ſhy in anſwering, and told them, *They lay in wait for her Life.* Being ask'd in what manner ſhe contracted with the Devil? ſhe ſaid, an Old Man ſpit upon her. A notable Method of Bargaining, and a pretty Invitation into his Service, and the neweſt way of Signing and Sealing between Parties that one ſhall hear of. I have read in your Books of Demmography, ſomething that looks more ſolemn; as that the Devil, in order to make People renounce God, uſually makes them touch a Book, which contains ſeveral abſtruſe Characters, and then threatens to throw them in a deep Lake of Black-water, if they don't inſtantly perform the Renunciation: Then at the Rendezvous of their Sabbath-meetings, he gives them a paſt of Black Millet, and the Liver of an unbaptized Child, which has a Vertue in it of making them keep the Devil's Secrets. He likewiſe ſucks the Blood of the Left-foot of the Sorcerer, or Witch; with the like. Theſe look like formal Initiations: But this poor Wretch was only ſpit upon by an old Farmer; perhaps in

Spleen

Spleen, or Deriſion, and poſſibly pi---s'd on, and this inſtantly debs her a Witch.

Paſſing by the two ſenſleſs Depoſitions of *Iſaiah Wright*, and *Thomas Harvey*, we are next preſented with an enchanted Pillow, with a great many Cakes of ſmall Feathers; which, how great a Wonder ſoever the Prieſts made of it, is no ſurprize to the *Upholſterers*, who meet with ſuch Prodigies every Day, in the ordinary Courſe of Buſineſs. As to the Maids being better after the burning the Feathers, it's no wonder, People in *Anne Thorn*'s Condition being always reliev'd by the Smell of ſuch Volatiles.

The laſt wonderful Phænomenon is, *Jane Wenham*'s appearing to her in the Shape of a Cat. Now ſetting aſide the Vicioufneſs of *Anne Thorn*'s Opticks, and the irregular Motion of her Spirits, which made her take a Cow for a Tree, and a Man for an Horſe. I deny that there can be any ſuch Transformation of an Humane Creature into a Cat, Dog, Hare, or any other Species. It is not poſſible, either in Soul or Body. Not in the Soul, for that would be a ſort of Mortality, to which the Soul is not ſubject. The Sorceries and magical Effects of Evil Spirits may, if God permits them, ſtop the Paſſages of our Senſes, diſturb them,

them, and enfeeble the Organs, but they cannot annihilate and extinguiſh the reaſonable Soul, efface the Image of God, to ſubſtitute a brutal Soul in its place. But if it ſhould be alledg'd, that the reaſonable Soul ſequeſters it ſelf, and makes room for the other, that cannot be done without the intire Death of the Body. Nor is it any more poſſible that two Souls, the Reaſonable and the Brutal, ſhould be joined together, for then there would be two eſſential Forms in the ſame Subject, which cannot be allow'd according to Phyſical Principles. Nor is the Transformation of the Body more poſſible; for this Veſſel cannot be changed in order to ſubſtitute another to the reaſonable Soul, which is alſo improper to vivifie and organize the Body of a Beaſt. This Head, this Humane Brain, in which the Imagination is lodg'd, and in general, all the Members of the whole Body, are ſo aptly compos'd for the Functions of a reaſonable Soul, that it cannot be lodg'd in the Head and Body of a Brute.

I ſhall take notice but of one ridiculous Paſſage more, and ſo cloſe up my Remarks upon the Narrative, which is, that of *Jane Wenham*'s coming to *Anne Thorn*'s Window, after her Commitment,

ment, and threatning to torment her.

Now I thought it was a received Opinion, That Witches had no Power over a Perſon after being in the Hands of Juſtice. But ſuppoſing they have, a Query very naturally occurs; How comes it to paſs, if theſe miſerable Wretches have Liberty to get out of Priſon, that they are ſuch Fools to return, and expoſe themſelves to the almoſt inevitable Danger of ſuffering the Torments appointed in ſuch Caſes. At this rate, we muſt believe they learn no Wit by converſing with the Devil.

Having briefly run over the Narrative, according to the Promiſe I made you at firſt, *Sir*, I proceed to ſhew how fallacious the Proofs of a Perſon's being a Witch are, and conſequently ought never to extend to loſs of Life. In *Germany*, People have a fine time of it: A bare Report that the Perſon is a Sorcerer, or a Witch, is enough: They are immediately upon that impriſon'd, and then interrogated; if they deny it, they are put to the Torture; if they own it, they pronounce their own Sentence. It is not ſo bad with us, God be thanked, but the Proof againſt the Criminals of this kind, amongſt us, is for the moſt part very precarious, the chief Evidence

againſt

againſt them being generally taken from Perſons ſaid to be bewitch'd by them, who are for the moſt part diſtemper'd in Mind, and conſequently their Atteſtation is of no more weight than a Perſon's under a Delirium.

If any Miſchief befals a Perſon, or his Family, after the paſſionate, but impotent threats of an Old Woman, it's a ſure Argument of her being a Witch; as if the Muttering of a few Words ſhould conceal in them the occult Malignity of an immediate Poiſon, or that a Wiſh ſhould be able to infect Cattle with the Murrain, or that God, whoſe Omnipotence but very rarely tranſcends the Laws of Nature, ſhould allow them to be violated continually, to oblige a petulant peeviſh old Woman, and the Devil be ſtill at her Devotion.

But if there be no Occaſion given, if Envy, Revenge, Malice, or Power, fall in with Ignorance, they may prove fatal to any deſtitute of Friends: Nay, ſome Performances, the like of which have not been ſeen before, in which appear ſome Motions, of which the Springs are unknown, have been ſufficient to fix the Brand of a Sorcerer upon a Perſon. A learned Man at *Paris* was accus'd of Magick, for printing a Commentary on the Tenth Book of *Euclid*; and a *Norman* Gentleman obſerving from the Barometer, that it would not be long be-

fore it rain'd, got his Hay mow'd whilſt the fine Weather laſted, which made the Country People report, he held a Correſpondence with the Devil. The Water Experiment to try Witches, is the moſt fallacious of any, ſo is that of Marks about the Body: A Mole or Wart, or any Excreſcency, paſſing current for the Stamp of the Devil. It would be endleſs to recount the ſeveral idle Tokens the Country People have of Witchcraft, and not one of them with the leaſt Shadow of Reaſon.

Now that the Vulgar ſhould aſcribe every thing that's a little ſurprizing, to Witchcraft, is no wonder; but that Clergymen, Men ſuppos'd to have made ſome Improvement in Phyſick, ſhould give into the little crude Notions of Nurſes and Old Women, about Things which might eaſily be ſolv'd by natural Cauſes, is aſtoniſhing; but there is a Vulgus amongſt the learned, who, becauſe they cannot readily aſſign a Cauſe for the Event, as being leſs obvious to Senſe, preſently conclude it preternatural. To own their Ignorance, 'twould put them into too great a Confuſion, or give them too much Trouble to ſearch into theſe Cauſes. 'Tis a ſurer as well as a ſhorter way, for their Reputation and Eaſe, to cry it up at once for a Miracle. By that they free themſelves from many perplexing Queries;

Queries; and intermixing the ſpecious Pretext of Religion with it, they ſeem to advance God's Glory.

I think, amongſt the few good Things that *Lewis* XIV. has done, this ought to be mention'd, that he has alter'd the Proceedings againſt Magic and Witchcraft, turning the Penalty of Death into Baniſhment, and afterwards by a Decree of the Council of State in 1672, order'd that all the Priſons in *Normandy* ſhould be ſet open to all Perſons that were detained for thoſe Crimes.

Before we take our leave of this Subject, we muſt examine a little into this Exorciſm by Prayer, which we have reſerved for the laſt. This Exorciſm is of a very ancient Date, practis'd amongſt the People of *Greece*. But as it was manag'd at that time, it became ſcandalous. It was perform'd generally by mean and mercenary old Women, who made it their Buſineſs to go and read certain Forms of Prayer, in order to pacify Perſons and Houſes. This Trade of an Exorciſt was accounted diſhonourable in theſe Days, upon the Score of its being a pious Fraud: For which Reaſon the Orator *Æſchines*, Son to a Woman who had practis'd it, was ignominiouſly treated by *Demoſthenes*. And I fear our modern Exorciſts will find as little Credit amongſt the Judicious, eſpecially if all the Exorciſms are perform'd like that upon *Anne Thorn*. Here is a poor Maid Epileptick, Hyſterical, Lunatick by turns: The Prieſt comes and prays by her in one of her Fits, which laſts more or leſs, according to the Diſpoſition of her Animal Spirits. The Fit goes off in its due Courſe, and this is call'd an Exorciſm. I do ſay, any one that

ſprinkles Water in a Perſon's Face that's going to ſwoon, has a better Claim to an Exorciſt, than theſe. I thought in all true Exorciſms, the Evil Spirit was caſt out and entirely baniſh'd, and left the Patient with ſome Struggles; ſtill we find him returning into this Exorciſ'd Perſon at Pleaſure: But perhaps it was not the ſame Devil, and 'twere more for the Prieſts Credit to give out it was a freſh Demon every time: So having a Legion upon their Hands, they would have the Reputation of the greateſt Kill-Devils in the Kingdom. It is with indignation, to be ſerious, a Man ſees ſuch bare-fac'd Impoſtures walk about in the Face of the World: But we preſume, they who would impoſe on the World in this manner, hope to find their Account in it, and that nothing but Self-Intereſt could induce them to propagate ſuch Deluſions.

If they could once fix this Belief in the Minds of the People, that they were indued with a ſpecial Power of diſpoſſeſſing Perſons, and aſſiſting them in preternatural Streights and Exigencies, by virtue of their Sacerdotal Office, how ſtrangely would theſe Surmiſes work in time, and not only attract the Devotion of the Simple to them, but likewiſe weighty Offerings? Some ſuch Deſign muſt be at the Bottom of this Deluſion, and the Multitude of ſuperſtitious People at this time of Day, may be a Party, for ought I know, ſufficient to ſupport it: Nay, if once a Prieſt could bring his Pariſhioners to believe this power of Exorciſing, I don't doubt but in time he might graft more

pretended

pretended Miracles upon that Stock, and ſet up at laſt, for driving away the *Plague*, curing Cattle of the Murrain, boaſt of a ſovereign Remedy againſt the Tooth-Ach, recover loſt Goods, and in ſhort, be reſorted to as a Prophet upon all Occaſions. As this would not only enrich them, and transfer the Wealth of the Pariſh into their Hand, ſo likewiſe it would raiſe their Perſons into greater Eſteem with the World. What Honours could be thought too great for ſuch a Wonder-working Prieſt? and when once conferr'd by the Laity, How would the Prieſt improve them, till at laſt they might be tempted to put in a modeſt Claim to be exempted from all politick and poſitive Laws, unleſs of their own making? Nay, who could think, but that they who were entruſted with ſuch a ſpecifick and God-like power, were the fitteſt to be Legiſlators themſelves, and that the Gods were come down to us in the Likeneſs of Men? Nay, if our Prieſthood in this degenerate State, could perſwade their People, that they were capable of doing ſo great a Miracle as exorciſing a poſſeſs'd Perſon, they might preſerve their Eſteem and Veneration without the labourious way of keeping up unblemiſh'd Sanctity, and Exemplarineſs of Life. This Point once gained, How expos'd and open ſhould we lie to all the Inroads of *Popiſh* Superſtition? We might then expect to ſee *Spiritual Fairs* ſet up in every Pariſh, where hallow'd Wax-Candles, Amulets, Charms, holy Oil, and a thouſand Tinklets would be ſold, as ſo many effectual Devil-Drivers, in the Abſence of the Prieſt. But to return to our Chevaliers of the Exorciſm: I don't apprehend, with what

Colour

Colour of Certainty theſe Gentlemen can attribute the Abatement of *Anne Thorn*'s Fits to the Succeſs of their Prayers? Indeed they choſe a proper time to prove the Force of their ſpiritual Drugs, even when ſhe was in her Fits; and they having a round Number of Collects to ply her with, it was ten to one if the Paroxiſm did not abate in that Time which was forthwith aſcrib'd to Prayer; whereas I would venture any Wager, that the Maid had come to her ſelf (as they vulgarly ſay) within that time, without the Aſſiſtance of thoſe Prayers. Not that I would here be thought to derogate from the Prayers of our Church, and the admirable Collects contain'd in the ſeveral Offices: No, they ſhall ever have my higheſt Eſteem; but I think them of no Uſe in the Caſe before us, as neither being adapted to the Circumſtance, or a Method any ways recommended in holy Writ. For I muſt beg leave to interpret that Paſſage of our Saviour's of *this kind, goeth not out but by Prayer and Faſting*, very different from the Reverend's Expoſition. By their making uſe of this Text in their Narrative, to juſtifie the Efficacy of Prayer in ſuch Caſes, one would think that they underſtood the Saying of our Saviour, as if Prayer and Faſting were the proper Methods for diſpoſſeſſing an Evil Spirit: Whereas, if we attend to the Context, we ſhall find it very different. This Expreſſion of our Saviour's has its Riſe from a Man's bringing his Son to him, who was poſſeſs'd with a dumb Spirit, having firſt try'd the Power of his Diſciples, who were unable to caſt him out. Hereupon Chriſt reproves them for their want of Faith, and caſts out this dumb and deaf

deaf Spirit: His Diſciples taking an Opportunity to ask him, Why they could not caſt him out? he told them, this *kind can come forth by nothing but by Prayer and Faſting.* Now by *Prayer and Faſting* in this place, Chriſt means the Preparatory Acts of Devotion and Mortification, in order to obtain ſo ſublime a Faith as was requiſite to the ſubduing of thoſe Evil Spirits; not that the bare *Opus operatum* of Prayer or Faſting, was of any Power to expel a Demon, or chaſe away a Spirit: For we never find our Saviour making uſe of any Form of Prayer, but with Authority commanding them forthwith to come out, which they did ſometimes with Reluctance; and upon the Approach of our Saviour, knowing it was their laſt Effort, would leave very terrible Marks of their Rage behind them. Of theſe Evil Spirits quitting them, and the immediate Change for the better, the Demoniacks were forthwith ſenſible, and they never return'd. But in this Mock-Exorciſm, we have no violent Struggles, but what were the immediate Effects of the Fit. The Maid is no ways ſenſible of any Spirit going out of her, ſhe is tormented afreſh in the Courſe of her Diſtemper; and one time, by the Prieſts own Confeſſion, *Aſmodæus* was deaf to the Liturgy. But one thing muſt not be omitted here, *viz.* that *Anne Thorn* never complain'd to theſe Divines, of the Devil's Uneaſineſs at the frequent Removes they gave him by Prayer; or that *Jane Wenham* finding her Power waſting by the frequent Application of that Lipſalve, did not, amongſt other Threatnings, warn *Anne Thorn* againſt this frequent Prayer: No, we find her, by their own Account, equally ſucceſsful,

ceſsful, and triumphing over their ſham Miracles, and themſelves expos'd as a Company of raw Artiſts.

As far as I can learn, the diſpoſſeſſing of Evil-Spirits was one of the nobleſt Exerciſes of Power Chriſt made uſe of whilſt he was upon Earth, and we find the Apoſtles (tho' far ſuperior to any of their Succeſſors, in Faith and good Works) not ſufficiently qualify'd for that great Undertaking; and therefore, methinks it would be but a becoming Modeſty in the Prieſthood, to examine their own Lives and Converſation, and their Conſciences would ſoon make a Report how far ſhort they fall of thoſe Qualifications neceſſary to ſo great a Work. This Method would abate their Pride, and humble their ſpiritual Sufficiency, and that Glory which they aſſume to themſelves now, upon a ſuppoſiticious Miracle, would then appear to them as the moſt deſperate Preſumption. The ſpiritual Gifts and Graces they convey to us in their Miniſterial Capacity, is all the Power we know they are veſted with at preſent, and aſpiring to more, is the only Means to weaken what they are allowed to have. If to this, the Clergy would be a little more converſant with the Hiſtory of Diſeaſes, and enquire more narrowly into the Phyſical Cauſes of things, ſeveral Effects would not appear ſo perplexing, neither would they be ſo forward to aſcribe thoſe Diſeaſes to the Devil, where Nature is primarily concern'd.

FINIS.